

Character Reference Letter

From: Brian Hong (Brother)

Your Honor,

My name is Brian Hong and I am Kyu's older brother. To start, I must admit that this is the most difficult statement I have to write, not because I lack the material, but because it would be impossible for my statements to seem unbiased. Although this is the final version of several iterations, I decided to remove much of my brother's past and familial justifications for his actions - as I sincerely do not want to insult your intelligence or waste your time. So, I only pray that he is viewed as a human being in the courtroom, not just another piece of paper on your docket, your honor.

Please understand that I most certainly am not accusing you of insensitivity, and let me explain a bit further - my brother looks better in-person than on-paper.

If my consulting career has taught me anything over the years, it is that we, as a society, are comforted by numbers and the uniformity they offer, especially if the situation may be unpredictable or uncomfortable. I believe gives us sense of control, as math is fair and numbers are simple, unlike most people we must deal with day-to-day. Yet, witnessing this contentment within our justice system was an eye-opening day of mine.

As the sentencing guidelines were nonchalantly described by a previous lawyer, accusations and charges began adding months of incarceration like weight-watcher points and our world came crushing down. Still, we kept our sight on the silver lining, even when we later discovered that the lawyer was up for a public position and was more focused of his record, as my brother was still young enough to turn his life around after the sentence.

Although I can only imagine the conditions he had to face, my brother began reading again, had time to slow his ever-pacing mind, and returned home. For the first time in his life, he was legally licensed to drive and set out realistic goals of part-time school and job. I was quite proud. For he faced all rejections due to his mark of 'convicted felon,' yet remained determined to make our parents proud, as they relocated to Las Vegas after their bankruptcy.

What was previously anger, guilt now fueled his drive - the fact that he had hammered nails through their hearts and knowing that they will only rust over time, learning that sirens trigger anxiety attacks on mother, and that his pubescent impulses and naivety may prevent him from doing right by our parents. He even seemed excited for every landscaping gig or heading to the race track, just to scrape burnt rubber pieces off of used tires. Then he was taken away without much explanation.

Your honor, I understand that you are placed in a very tough position in defending for the future of our society. So, I will not ask you for favors or expect anything but fairness in your judgement, your honor. And on paper, my brother is an enigma even to me. In every stage of our lives, being introduced as brothers left most people in disbelief due to our apparent differences, such as speech pattern or fashion choice. But what they could not see is that we shared a source of joy - the smiles he'd hide away whenever he was helping someone in need or how eager he'd be watching someone open his present - it was like looking in a mirror.

Over history, the line drawn between right or wrong are often washed over by tides of time - just a couple hundred years back, we accepted and watched as others burned alive in the name of public safety from witchcraft. It's impossible to make all the right decisions, even if you plan for it. During these uncertain times, I have been finding myself repeating, 'if you want to make God laugh, tell him your plans.' So, instead of making excuses for the past or plans for the future, I will be spending every present moment I can count, preparing for his return. Thank you for your time.

Best Regards,

Brian Hong